

Statement of Faith and Doctrine

Pastor Val Bigger, Updated March 2014

Disclaimer

I do not claim infallibility for this statement of Biblical doctrine and am open to improvement and correction from Scripture. I do however hold firmly to these doctrines as I study and understand them and call on others to search and submit to the Scriptures as well to authenticate our accuracy.

Purpose

As conversation and potential disagreement occur, I strive to remain open to learn from each other, adjust and clarify our understanding of Scripture, and whenever possible, use disagreements to build closer fellowship and greater understanding for all. The cause of unity in the church is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of church or school or mission or ministry, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries.¹

Definitions

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2Tim 3:16, 17).

- 1) *Essential for Salvation. It is not necessary to understand all of Scripture in order to be saved. However, some essentials are absolutely necessary to fully understand in order to accurately believe and be saved. These areas are identified with a single asterisk.
- 2) **Essential for Christian Living. It is not necessary to understand all of Scripture in order live and grow in Christ as God desires. However, it is absolutely necessary to understand some essentials in order to live the Christian life. These areas are identified with a double asterisk.
- 3) ***Distinctive. Some areas of Scripture remain unclear by design, such as prophecy. These areas of Scripture demand humility in our attempt to understand and grace as we discuss with each other, for they are not intended to be fully understood yet. These areas are identified with a triple asterisk.
- 4) **** Necessary for Teaching. Some areas of Scripture can be unnecessarily divisive or otherwise harmful to the body if not well understood by the teacher. I

¹ Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith

have therefore placed them in a category I believe are necessary for all teachers to understand.

Understanding “Whole” Biblical Truths (****Necessary for Teaching)

Systematic Theology is the study of what the whole Bible teaches us today on any given topic. Studying all the individual passages of Scripture together gives us the ability to answer the question, “What does the Bible say about...?” for any given topic.

Biblical theology is the study of the whole Bible story. How the story of redemption weaves from Genesis to Revelation, and how the smaller stories within the individual books and chapters relate to the bigger story.

It is necessary to understand more than what a single passage or even a single book reveals about each particular topic about God. By doing so, we can much more accurately:

- 1) Read and interpret individual passages of the Bible;
- 2) Apply the truths of the Bible to our present lives; and
- 3) Proclaim to others “what the Bible says” as a whole instead of just what Moses said, or what Paul said.

As an example, understanding the basic doctrine of God being One will prevent us from falsely reading in one passage that “Jesus is God”, in another that the “Holy Spirit is God”, and come to the wrong conclusion that there are two or three Gods. Innumerable errors can be prevented through a solid systematic understanding of biblical truths.

Studying Whole Truths (****Necessary for Teaching)

Study with prayer; acknowledging God’s necessary hand in unveiling our hearts and minds to His truth (Ps 119:18, 1Cor 2:14) and the necessity of His Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17-19).

Study with humility; not allowing our increase in understanding of God’s truth to lead us to think more highly of ourselves or less of others (1 Pet 5:5, James 1:19-20) and understanding that it is from God alone that we receive wisdom and knowledge about Him (James 3:13, 17-18, 1Cor 8:1)

Study with reason; carefully meditating, thinking and drawing logical conclusions about the truths as they are revealed to us, but also understanding that God’s ways and thoughts are far above ours, (Isa 55:8-9) and when confronted with an apparent contradiction or paradox, we should not be tempted to twist clear meaning of Scripture into a more palatable or understandable meaning. Ultimately, there will be no internal contradiction in Scripture of God’s thoughts (Ps 119:160)

Study with help from others; knowing God has gifted teachers who have learned these truths beforehand and are specifically called to help others understand (1Cor 12:28)

Study with rejoicing and praise; always aware that the study of Scripture is not simply an intellectual exercise, but growing in understanding of a living God that draws us into a closer and more intimate relationship with Him (Duet 6:5, Ps 19:8, Ps 119:14, 103, 111, 162, Ps 139:17)

A. Doctrine of the Word of God

Source of the Word of God (**Essential for Christian Living)

The Word of God as recorded in the Bible has always been the actual words, thoughts and ideas God revealed directly to the prophets and apostles in their language and in various forms.

- 1) As the Person of Jesus Christ. The Bible sometimes refers to the Son of God as the Word of God, indicating that among the Trinity, it is especially God the Son who in His person and words has the role of communicating the character of God and His will for our lives to us (Rev 19:13, John 1:1, 1John 1:1, Heb 1:1).
- 2) As Speech. In His original decrees of creation (Gen 1:3, 24, Ps 33:6), or by speaking directly to people (Gen 2:16-17, Ex 20:1-3, Matt 3:17), speaking through human lips (Deut 18:18-20, Jer 1:9).
- 3) Put directly into written form by God (Ex 31:18) or by His prophets and apostles (Deut 31:9-13, Isa 30:8, 1Cor 14:37; cf. 2Pet 3:2).

The Canon of the Word of God

The Old Testament and the New Testament canon have always met several criteria for being considered God's Word. These books claim for themselves the authority of being God's Words, were always regarded as canon by the Jewish people who originated them, were considered authoritative Scripture by Jesus and the New Testament authors, and in total are consistent in their revelation of God's will and ways.

The Apocrypha is not Scripture

Several books were added to the canon in 1546 at the Council of Trent by the Roman Catholic Church. It was established that the church had the authority to constitute a literary work as Scripture, whereas tradition and Protestants hold that the church can only recognize what God has already caused to be written in His own words. The apocrypha do not meet any of the criteria held by the rest of the Bible; they do not claim the authority of Scripture, were not regarded as Scripture by the Jews, Jesus or the Apostles, and have within them ideas inconsistent with the 66 Old and New Testament books.

The Characteristics of the Word of God (**Essential for Christian Living)

The Bible is the only revealed truth of God, given without error through the Holy Spirit as written down by the prophets and apostles, and when read and believed in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, provides the only way to bring us into reconciliation with God and to know His will for our lives. The 66 books of the canonized Bible are:

- 1) Divine; God's actual Words written down by men as led by the Spirit of God (Duet 18:18, Jeremiah 1:9, Ezekiel 2:7, 2Timothy 3:16)
- 2) Authoritative; providing the standard by which all men's actions will be judged as either right or wrong, moral or immoral, good or bad. (Hebrews 4:12, 1Cor 2:13, 2Cor 13:3)
- 3) True; factual for all men at all times through history (Pro 30:5, Heb 6:10, 2Sam 7:28, Tit 1:2) in both the Old and New Testaments (Luke 24:25, 1Cor 14:37, 2Peter 3:16)
- 4) Good; beneficial for all men (2Tim 3:16)
- 5) Perfect; inerrant as originally written (Heb1:1-2)
- 6) Pure; perfectly inerrant today in meaning (Matt 5:18, Ps12:6) and over 99% pure in textual detail (1Kings 4:26 and 2Chron 9:25)
- 7) Clear; understandable by any man who humbly seeks after God (Deut 6:6-7, Ps 119:130, Ps 19:7, 1Cor 2:14)
- 8) Necessary; for knowing the Gospel (Rom 10:13-17), attaining a saving knowledge of God (John 3:18, 14:6, 1 Tim 2:5, Acts 4:12), maintaining a spiritual life (Matt 4:4 & Deut 8:3) and knowing God's will with certainty (Ps 119:1). It is unnecessary for knowing that God exists (Ps 19:1, Acts 14:16-17, Rom 1:19-21), or that God is powerful and is of right character and morality (Rom 1:32, 2:14-15)
- 9) Sufficient; for knowing all that God intends for man to know at their time in history, and for us to know today, and all that is necessary for salvation (2Tim 3:15-17, Ps 119:1), sufficient without needing man to add anything (Deut 4:2, Rev 22:18-19), and sufficient in its expression of what is sinful; that is nothing is sinful unless explicitly forbidden in Scripture (Ps 119:1).

****Note:** It is essential to have an accurate understanding of what the Bible is in order to desire to read it, trust what is written, and follow what has been learned, which is essential for a growing Christian.

B. Doctrine of God

Existence of God (*Essential for Salvation)

Witness of Human Conscience. All humans have a deep inner sense that a moral God exists (Rom 1:21).

Witness of God's Creation. The world around us, the creation bears additional witness to the existence of God and His power and eternal nature to all mankind (Rom 1:20, Acts 14:7, Ps 19:1-2). As a result, no man has an excuse for not having some knowledge of God.

Veil of Human Sin. Our fallen sin-nature keeps us from seeing clearly the witness of creation and our conscience allowing many to foolishly deny God's existence (Ps 14:1, 53:1, Rom 1:1-8)

God's Intervention Is Required to See Clearly. Only God can overcome our sin and enable us to be persuaded of His existence (2Cor 4:4)

*Note: Believing in the existence of God is essential for our salvation, for without believing in God, we will not be able to believe in His character, be able to view our own sin in opposition to His character, come to understand our need for salvation and come to a saving faith.

Knowability of God (*Essential for Salvation)

God can only be known if He reveals Himself to us (Rom 1:19, 1Cor 1:21)

We can never fully understand God or even any one single thing about God (Ps 145:3, Ps 139:6, Rom 11:33)

We can know more than simply facts about God, we can know God truly and personally (Jer 9:23-24, Heb 8:11, 1 John 5:20).

*Note: Knowing God is essential for salvation, for without knowing God, one will not be able to know His character, be able to view their own sin in opposition to His character, understand our need for salvation, and come to a saving faith.

Character of God (*Essential for Salvation)

Incommunicable Attributes. Some attributes of God have not been given, or communicated to humankind at all, and only pertain to God.

- 1) God is completely independent of anything (Job 41:11, Acts 17:24-25)
- 2) God is unchangeable (Ps 102:25-27, Mal 3:6)
- 3) God is eternal and not affected by time (Ps 90:2, Rev 1:8)
- 4) God is omnipresent (Jer 23:23-24, 1 Kings 8:27)

Communicable Attributes. Communicable attributes of God have been communicated at least in part to humans as His image-bearers, and can be generalized into five general categories that humankind at least in part, shares with God.

- 1) God's being is spiritual and hence invisible (1 Kings 8:27, John 1:18, 1 Tim 1:17, 1 Tim 6:16).

2) God has the mental attributes of knowledge; He knows all things being omniscient (Job 37:16, 1 John 3:20), wise making decisions that cause the best results (Job, 9:4, Rom 11:33, Rom 16:27), truthful and faithful; everything He says is true and will come to pass (John 17:3, Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18).

3) God has good moral attributes that actually define what good is (Luke 18:19, Ps 100:5, Ps 34:8); the author and provider of love (Zeph 3:17-18, 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:11); is merciful displaying goodness to those in distress, is gracious being good to those who deserve punishment (Ps 103:8), and patient to those who deserve punishment now (Ex 34:6). God is also a holy being separated from sin (Heb 12:14, Ps 71:22, Lev 19:2), the author of peace and order (1Cor 14:33, Rom 15:33) righteousness and justice (Deut 32:4), is jealous (2Cor 11:2, Ex 34:14, Is 48:11) and wrathful toward sin (Ex 32:9-10, Rom 1:18).

4) God is a God of purpose having a general will that is the driving reason for everything that happens (Eph 1:11, Rev 4:11) and is totally free any influence of any kind (Ex 3:14, Ps 115:3). He keeps some of his will to himself (Duet 29:29, Matt 6:10) and some He reveals to us and expects us to understand and take part in (Duet 29:29, Matt 7:21, Eph 5:17). God's will is all powerful, omnipotent over all things in the creation (Luke 1:37, Ps 24:8)

5) God is perfect (Matt 5:48, Ps 18:30). He is blessed in that He is fully delighted in Himself needing nothing more to be fulfilled (1 Tim 6:15), is the definition of beauty (Ps 27:4) and in glorious being. He is honorable and excellent (Is 43:7, Rom 3:28, Heb 1:3).

*Note: Believing rightly in the character of God is essential for salvation, for without knowing and then believing in His character, we will be unable to view own sin in opposition to His character, come to understand our need for salvation, and come to a saving faith.

Triune Nature of God (*Essential for Salvation)

Each of the three persons of God are distinct and separate persons. Not simply different personalities of the same person. The persons of the Trinity:

- 1) Talk to each other (Gen 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, Is 6:8)
- 2) Call each other God (Ps 45:6-7, Heb 1:8).
- 3) Are spoken of separately by the prophets (Ps 110:1, Is 63:10, Mal 3:1-2, Hos 1:7, Is 48:16).
- 4) Are spoken of individually by the Apostles (Matt 28:19, 1Cor 12:4-6, 2Cor 13:14, 1 Pet 1:2)
- 5) Intercede for us between each other (1 John 2:1, Heb 7:25, Rom 8:27)

Each of these persons is fully God, not a part of God:

- 1) Christ is fully God (John 1:1-4, John 20:27, Is 9:6)
- 2) The Holy Spirit is fully God (Matt 28:19, Acts 5:3-4, Ps 139:7-8, 1Cor 2:10-11)
- 3) The Father is fully God (Gen 1, John 1:1-18)

Yet even as they are separate, each one fully God, they are but is One God; the Lord God is One (Deut 6:4-5, Is 45:5-6, 21-22, 1 Tim 2:5, Rom 3:30, 1Cor 8:6)

* Note: Believing rightly in the triune nature of God is essential for salvation. Without understanding that Christ is God, we are unable to rely on His saving work (see doctrine of Christ). Without believing the Holy Spirit is God, we are unable to trust absolutely in His work (see doctrine of the Holy Spirit).

God's Creation

God created the universe out of nothing (Gen 1), including all the heavens and earth, and all that is in them (Acts 4:24, Rev 4:11). Additionally, this can only be believed by faith (Heb 11:3).

God directly created Adam and Eve (Gen 2:7, 21-22).

The Son created (John 1:3, 1Cor 8:6, Heb 1:2) and the Spirit also had a distinct role in creation (Gen 1:2, Job 33:4, Ps 104:30)

God is distinct from His creation, not a part of it, and the creation is dependant on God to continue (Job 12:10, Acts 17:25, 28, Col 1:17, Heb 1:3)

The universe was created to display God's glory (Is 43:7, Ps 19:1-2, Rev 4:11) and it was declared by God to be very good (Gen 1:31).

The Providence of God (**Essential for Christian Living)

God continues to play an active role in the universe today by preserving His creation, cooperating by working concurrently with it, and governing every thing and every action in the universe.

God preserves His creation by continually and actively carrying it along (Heb 1:3, Col 1:17).

God cooperates with His creation in every action, directing it concurrently by His will and with the unique attributes of each creature, such as man's ability to make willing, real choices, causing them to act as they do. (Eph 1:11). He directs inanimate creation according to it's attributes (Job 37:6-13) such as making the grass grow (Ps 104:14, Matt 6:30). It includes the animals (Matt 6:26, 10:29) seemingly random events that affect humans (Pro 16:33), events that are caused by groups of humans in history (Job 12:23, Ps 22:28, Acts 17:26) as well as the days ((Ps 136:16, Job 14:5), the ways (Jer 10:23), the steps (Pro 16:9), the hearts of kings (Pro 21:1, Ezr 6:22, 1:1) and the hearts of all men (Ps

33:14-15). God especially guides the will and actions of believers solely for His good pleasure (Phil 2:13).

God governs all things in creation to accomplish His purposes. God rules over all (Ps 103:19), answers to nobody (Dan 4:35), has in subjection all things (1Cor 15:27, Rom 11:36) to accomplish what He wants (Eph 1:11). God planned and decreed every aspect before the creation began (Acts 2:23) to include; Jesus' death on the cross (Acts 4:28), who would be saved (Eph 1:4) and the specific good works the elect would do once saved (Eph 2:10). He governs mankind according to our created attribute to make real choices and being held responsible for them (Gen 3:12) and to ask and receive from God as a result of our prayers (James 4:2, John 16:24). His governance allows us great confidence to face our enemies (Ps 4:8), not worry about the future (Matt 6:26,31, Matt 10:29-31), face trials knowing they are temporary (1Pet 1:6-7) and make a real choice for salvation (John 3:16).

Miracles of God

God arouses awe and wonder in people using miracles, bearing witness to His power. They are "less common" activities of God, usually referred to as signs, which are events that typically point to or indicate something else, wonders used to amaze and astonish people and miracles or mighty works used to display God's divine power. Prophets were given the ability to validate God was with them (Ex 4:2-8, 1 Kings 18:24, 36-38). Jesus and the Apostles were given the power to do miracles to prove He was the Messiah from God (John 3:2, Heb 2:4), validate the Gospel message (Acts 19:11-12), help those in need (Matt 20:30), remove hindrances to ministry (Matt 8:15) and to glorify God (Matt 9:8, John 9:3).

Prayer (**Essential for Christian Living)

Prayer is personal, intimate communication with God that acknowledges our dependence on Him (Luke 11:13), helps us to trust and love Him, and brings us into deeper fellowship with Him. Prayer changes the way God acts toward us (James 4:2, Luke 11:9-10, 1 John 1:9), is made possible only by Jesus our mediator (1 Tim 2:5) and when spoken in His authorization; "in His name" (John 14:13-14). We should pray continually (1Thes 5:17, Deut 9:25, Gen 32:26), patiently (Ps 27:14, 38:15, 130:5-6), according to God's will ((1 John 5:14-15), in faith (Matt 21:22), confessing known and unknown sin (Matt 6:12, 1 John 1:9, Ps 19:12, James 5:16), forgiving others (Mark 11:25), with humility (James 4:6, 1 Pet 5:5) and in earnest (Heb 5:7, Dan 9:19).

Angels

Angels are created (Neh 9:6) spiritual (Heb 1:14, Luke 24:39) beings that guard and protect us (Ps 34:7, 91:11) and in the past have taken bodily form to appear to people (Matt 28:5, Heb 13:2). They are alive (Ezek 1:5-14, Rev 4:6-8), numerous (Deut 33:2, Heb 12:22), have powers (Eph 1:21, 2 Pet 2:11 cf. Matt 28:2) and carry out God's plans by bringing God's messages (Luke 1:11-19, Acts 8:26), and judgment to people (2 Sam 24:16-17). They glorify God (Ps 103:20) but should not be worshiped (Col 2:18).

Satan and Demons

Demons are angels, originally created good (Gen 1:31) but rebelled against God, fell and lost their position with God (Jude 6). Satan is the head demon who will be cast into hell in the end (Isa 14:12-15). Satan and His demons can tempt and cause people harm if give authority from God (Job 1:7-2:7), but are limited to only what God allows (Job 1:12, 2:6) and can be successfully resisted by Christians (James 4:7).

C. Doctrine of Christ

Humanity of Christ (*Essential for Salvation)

Jesus was conceived in the womb of His virgin mother Mary, by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:34-35; cf. 3:23), enabling Him to be both fully human (John 3:16, Gal 4:4) and deity in one person without the inherited sin of mankind (Luke 1:35). His human body bore the same weaknesses as ours, being tired (John 4:6), thirsty (John 19:28), hungry (Matt 4:2) and weak (Luke 23:26) and able to die physically (Luke 23:46).

His human body rose from the dead (John 16:28; cf. 17:11) and ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9) to be man forever (Acts 1:11, Rev 1:13, Matt 26:29). Jesus had a human mind that was troubled (John 12:27) sorrowful (Matt 26:38), learned obedience (Heb 5:8-9) and was able to be tempted in every way we are as we are but did not sin (Luke 4:2-3, Heb 4:15, 2Cor 5:21).

*Note: Believing in Christ's humanity is essential to salvation, for without Christ being human, we would not be able to relate to His suffering or temptation. Furthermore, His sacrificial atonement for the sins of humanity would not be valid. Unless He was truly human, his suffering would not have been real human suffering as we suffer, for how can God suffer physically as man does? Additionally, His death on the cross would be invalid, for would God really fear or be susceptible to a physical death? His resurrection would not be valid either, for if his body were not exactly as ours, His resurrection would not give us hope that we too will be resurrected as He was.

Deity of Christ (*Essential for Salvation)

Jesus is referred to with the Greek word "theos" in the New Testament numerous times; the same word is often used to refer to God (John 1:1, 1:18, Rom 9:5, Titus 2:13, 2 Pet 1:1). The same word for Lord, "kyrios" that is often used in the Old Testament as a translation of the Hebrew word YHWH or Yahweh, is also used many times in the New Testament in a context that Old Testament readers would have recognized as the name of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Luke 2:11, Matt 3:3, 1Cor 8:6) for Christ.

Jesus also referred to Himself as “I AM”, exactly as God had in the Old Testament (John 8:57, Ex 3:14) and is also called the “Alpha and Omega” as God was (Rev 1:8, 22:13)

Attributes of Deity (*Essential for Salvation)

Jesus demonstrated omnipotence by calming the sea (Matt 8:26-27), multiplying loaves of bread and fish (Matt 14:19-21) and changing water into wine (John 2:1-11) and knew peoples actions and location without being there (John 1:48). He demonstrated His omniscience in knowing peoples thoughts (Mark 2:8, John 6:64), claimed omnipresence after His ascension (Matt 18:20, 28:20), sovereignty by forgiving sins (Mark 2:5-7), immortality (John 2:19-22, Heb 7:16, 1 Tim 6:16) and being worthy of worship (Rev 19:10, Phil 2:9-11, Heb 1:6, Rev 5:12-14).

Jesus was fully God (John 17:5) before he lowered Himself to take on the attributes of humanity (Phil 2:7-8, 2Cor 8:9) but yet still contained all the fullness of God (Col 2:9) and so was rightly named “God with us” or Emmanuel (Matt 1:23).

*Note: The whole message of Scripture teaches that no human being could ever save mankind. Only God Himself could save, for salvation is from the Lord (Jonah 2:9); could be the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5); and reveal Himself most fully to us (John 14:9). Without His attribute of deity, Jesus would not qualify as the Messiah.

The Atonement of Christ (*Essential for Salvation)

The atonement is the work Christ did in His life and death that earns our salvation. It was caused by the combination of God’s love for us (John 3:16) and His justice requiring sin to have an appropriate penalty (Isa 53:10, Rom 3:25) as a complete payment (Isa 53:11, John 19:30) so that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom 8:1).

It was completely unnecessary (2 Pet 2:4) for God to desire to save any of us, but once He did decide, it was the only way to save us and remain just, according to His character (Matt 26:39, Luke 24:25-26)

It was only possible because of Christ’s perfect life (1Cor 1:30, Rom 5:19), his suffering in life (Isa 53:3, Matt 4:1-11), bearing our sin on the cross (2Cor 5:21, Gal 3:13, Heb 9:28), and being abandoned on the cross by the disciples (Mark 14:37-41, Matt 26:56) and God (Matt 27:46, Hab 1:13, Ps 22:1-2) and carrying the weight of the guilt of all and bearing the wrath of God alone (Rom 3:25-26, Heb 2:17, Heb 7:27).

Resurrection of Christ (*Essential for Salvation)

Jesus was resurrected in a physical body after being physically dead. His body was recognizable (Matt 28:9, John 20:19-20, 26-28, 21:7, 12), physical (Matt 28:9, 24:30, John 20:20, Luke 24:39) yet somehow transformed, unbound by physical limitations (Luke 24:31, John 20:19), unable to suffer, be ill, weak or die (1Cor 15:42-44, 53). His resurrection gives us hope for regeneration in this life (1 Pet 1:3, Eph 2:5-6; cf. Col 3:1,

Phil 3:10), to overcome the bondage of sin (Rom 6:4, 6:14) and receive new resurrected bodies after this life is complete (1Cor 6:14, 2Cor 4:14, 1Cor 15:12-58).

Ascension of Christ (*Essential for Salvation)

Jesus ascended into heaven after His bodily resurrection (Luke 24:50-51) to receive back His former glory and honor that was not His while on this earth (John 17:5, Acts 2:33, Phil 2:8, Rev 5:12) to sit at the right hand of God (Ps 110:1, Heb 1:3) receiving authority to rule over everything (Eph 1:20-21, 1 Pet 3:22). His ascension, like His resurrection, foreshadows His second coming to earth (John 14:2-3, Heb 9:28) as escort for our ascension into heaven (1Thes 4:17, John 14:3) where we too will reside with Him (John 14:2-3) forever.

*Note: Believing in the atoning work of Christ is believing that He is the Savior of humanity. Believing in Him as Savior is the very act of Salvation (Acts 16:31). If Christ did not atone for the sins of mankind, then all mankind continues to be under the curse of the law (Gal 3:10-14).

Offices of Christ

Jesus fills all the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest and king of Israel. As prophet, Jesus speaks for God, but unlike the prophets, he speaks on His own authority perfectly revealing the Father to us (John 1:1, 14:9, Heb 1:1-2). As priest, Jesus offers the perfect sacrifice to atone for sins, but unlike the Old Testament priests, Jesus' atonement is sufficient for all sins in one sacrifice (Heb 9:26, 10:4). Jesus, like the prophets, brings us nearer to God (Heb 9:1-7, 10:19-22) and continually prays and intercedes on our behalf (Heb 7:25, Rom 8:34). A king, Jesus rules over our lives as head of the church (Eph 1:20-22, Matt 28:18) as the kings of Israel did, only unlike the kings, he will reign forever. He will return to reign over the entire earth and all its inhabitants in great power and great glory (Matt 26:64, 2Thes 1:7-10, Rev 19:11-16).

D. Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Work of the Holy Spirit (**Essential for Christian Living)

The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world and especially in the church, in 5 ways:

1) He empowers. The Holy Spirit gives life to all creatures (Ps 104:30, Job 34:14-15) and spiritual life to believers (John 3:6-7, 6:63, 2Cor 3:68, Rom 8:11) giving power especially for kingdom service (Acts 1:8) to include leadership (Num 27:18), artistic skill (Ex 31:33, 35:31), teaching skills (Ex 35:34), overcoming spiritual opposition (Matt 12:28, 1Cor 12:10). He equips Christians individually and specifically (1Cor 12:11) and continues to speak to peoples hearts (Heb 3:7, 10:15).

2) He purifies. The Holy Spirit cleanses believers from sin and sanctifies us, making us more holy in the conduct of life by convicting the world of sin (John 16:8-11, Acts 7:51), helping believers to break the bondage of sin (1Cor 6:11) and eventually producing in them more and more godly attributes (Gal 5:22-23, 2Cor 3:18, 2Thes 2:13) eventually “putting to death” the sinful deeds of the body (Rom 8:13).

3) He reveals. The Holy Spirit revealed the entire Old Testament to the prophets (2 Pet 1:21) and the New testament Apostles (John 16:13, 16:3). He manifests the presence of God in many ways (John 1:32, Acts 2:2-, Rom 8:16, Heb 2:4), gives direction and guidance to people (Rom 8:14, Gal 5:18), provides assurance that believers belong to God (Rom 8:16, 1 John 3:24) and teaches and illuminates knowledge of god (Eph 1:17-19).

4) He unifies. The Holy Spirit unifies the church into the “body of Christ” (Acts 2:44-47, 2Cor 13:14, Phil 2:1-2).

5) He varies his positive effect according our response to Him. We can resist Him (Acts 7:51), grieve Him (Eph 4:30) and quench Him (1Thes 5:19). He will not force Himself upon us (1Cor 14:32). The implication is that our resistance will result in His diminishing His positive effect on our lives, just as accepting Him, praying for Him can result in a closer fellowship with Him that will result in being entrusted with gifts (1Cor 12:11) , truth (2 Tim 1:14), and ministry (Acts 20:28). Any significant work for God will be accomplished in dependence on the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:6).

**** Note:** It essential for Christian living to have a good understanding of how the Holy Spirit works and what He does. Otherwise we are apt to misinterpret happenings around us and feelings we have as being of the Holy Spirit when is not, and be exposed to workings of the Holy Spirit and disregard Him unknowingly.

E. Doctrine of Man (Anthropology)

Man Created Male and Female (**Essential for Christian Living)

God created mankind in His image as male and female (Gen 5:1-2) glorify Himself as we display marriage as a harmonious interpersonal relationship that reflects the relationship of the triune God; equality between distinct persons but with different roles and authorities. The harmony of marriage is commanded through instruction to leave our parents and cleave to each other (Gen 2:24) as joined by God (Matt 19:6), sharing ourselves freely with each other (1Cor 7:3-5) while forsaking any sexual intimacy with anyone else as sins against God and our own body (1Cor 6:16, 18-20). The marriage is intended to be life-long (Mal 2:14-16, Rom 7:2).

While of equal value (Gal 3:27-28), males are created with distinctions from females, and should act differently (1Cor 11:7), just as God the Father, God the Son and God the

Spirit are equally valuable and powerful, but with different roles (i.e. the Father has the authority to speak creation into existence [Gen 1:1-2], send the Son who submits and humbles Himself to die for the redemption of humanity [Luke 22:42; Phil 2:6-8] with the Holy Spirit who is poured out to empower and equip the church after Pentecost [Acts 1:8, 2:1-36]). Like the persons of God, males and female also are of equal power (Acts 2:17-18) and value; both being gifted equally and individually for the common good of the church (1Cor 12:7, 1Cor 12:11, 1Pet 4:10), but also with different roles; the male being the authority (1Cor 11:3) in much the same way God is the authority over the son, and the female as the helper (Gen 2:18) in much the same way that God is a helper of mankind (use of Hebrew word *ezer* in Hos 13:9).

This distinction in role and authority was evident before the fall, for Adam was created before Eve (Gen 2:7, 1Tim 2:13), Eve was created for Adam (Gen 2:18) and Adam named Eve (Gen 2:19). The distinction in roles remains after the fall, for Adam is referred to as the representative of the human race as the beginning of sin (1Cor 15:22), and God speaks first to Adam after the first sin (Gen 2:15-17). The distinction of roles is distorted afterward however, as Adam is cursed to work the ground (Gen 3:18) with Eve's desire for his role of authority (Gen 3:16) and Eve is cursed to have painful labor and have Adam "rule" over her in a way that goes beyond the loving authority relationship originally designed.

Once saved however, Christians are called and empowered to turn back toward the original design, the God glorifying relationship our marriages were originally intended to be; males as the authority, completely and sacrificially loving their wives as Christ sacrificially loves the church. He should always place her needs above his own for the purpose of her sanctification, just as Christ gave up even His life (Eph 5:22-29). The woman should submit her will and desire for authority to her husband, just as Christians submit our desire for authority over our own lives to Christ for the purpose of our sanctification (Eph 5:22-24).

Nature of Man

Man is created with both a physical component; the body, and a spiritual component; the soul. Both parts are contaminated by sin (2Cor 7:1), able to be cleansed from sin (1Cor 7:34) and intended to exist forever with God (1Cor 15:51-54). Many arguments exist debating whether the soul and spirit are separate. In discussion, dividing the spirit and soul is acceptable, but unnecessary. Scripture seems to speak of the soul and spirit interchangeably; both depart upon death (Gen 35:18, 1Kings 17:21) and can sin (1Pet 1:22, Rev 18:14) among many other things.

**** Note:** It is necessary to believe and obey the doctrine of marriage in order to live a life that accurately glorifies the character and relationship of the triune God, and shed the curse of sin displayed on the male's natural disposition to "rule" over the female, and the female's natural disposition to desire the authority of the male.

F. Doctrine of Sin (Hamartiology)

Sin (*Essential for Salvation)

"Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude or nature" - Grudem. Acts are physical activities such as stealing, murder, lying, etc (Ex 20:13-16). Attitudes are internal mental/emotional/spiritual activities without any external act, such as being jealous (Ex 20:12, 17), angry or lustful (Mat 5:22). Sinning "by nature" means all natural instincts and bents that draw us toward sinful acts and attitudes (Eph 2:3). Sin, as a failure to conform to God's law, can be judged by either His written law (Rom 2:17-29) or His unwritten law (Rom 2:15) and is all rightly call lawlessness (1John 3:4).

* Note: It is necessary to believe in the doctrine of sin, for without believing that sin is a reality, there is no need to either desire or understand our need for a Savior that can rescue us from the just punishment of our sin. Without a perceived need of a Savior, we will not cry out in need and accept one as Lord over our lives.

Origin of Sin

Sin does not come from God, for He is perfect, just and without iniquity (Deut 34:2). He does not do wrong (Job 34:10) or tempt us to do wrong (James 1:13). It cannot be said then, that God either sins, directly causes us to sin today, or directly caused sin to enter into the world. Being sovereign, we must admit that God certainly allowed sin to enter into the world with Adam and Eve, just as He allows sin to enter into our lives today.

Effects of Sin

Sin causes us to question God and all that is true, and ultimately believe what is not true and deny what is (Gen 2:17 vs 3:4). Sin also causes us to question God about what is right and wrong, and ultimately allows us to believe right things as wrong and wrong things as right (Gen 2:17 vs Gen 3:5). Sin allows us to believe wrongly about as mankind's relationship to God, deceiving us to believe we should be as God is (Gen 3:5), instead of subordinate to Him according to His likeness (Gen 1:26). Sin is ultimately irrational; causing us to believe as true what is really false as a fool (Ps 14:1, Prov 10:23, 12:15, 14:7).

Inherited Sin

All men are automatically guilty of sin because our father Adam, who represented all humanity as the first man, sinned (Rom 5:12, 18-19). It may at first seem unfair that we are seen as guilty because someone else sinned (Adam), but we must remember that we are also found sinless by the same rule. We are represented by a perfect man (Christ), who also represented all of humanity (Rom 5:19).

Sinful Nature -Inherited Corruption (**Essential for Christian Living)

In addition to being guilty because of Adam's sin, we are also sinful by nature because his sinful nature has been passed down to us (Ps 51:5). This sinful nature does not need

to be taught (Eph 2:3). We need instead to be taught righteousness because that is not our “natural” bent (Eph 6:4). Our sinful nature corrupts every component of man (Rom 7:8) completely (Tit 1:15), and makes us unable to do any good with regard to God (Eph 4:18, John 15:5). Sin affects every man (Ps 14:3, 143:2, 1Kings 8:46, Rom 3:9-10, 23) from birth (Ps 58:3) and continues to plague those who are saved from God’s judgment of sin (1John 1:8 and 1John 3:2).

God’s View of Sin (**Essential for Christian Living)

God views each and every sin, whether they seem large or small to us, as making us entirely guilty before Him (Gen 2:17, Rom 5:16, Duet 27:26, Gal 3:10, James 2:10-11) and thus in need of salvation. Some sins are, however, viewed by God as being greater than others (John 19:11, Ezek 8:6, 13, 15, Matt 5:19). Intentional sin is viewed more harshly than unintentional sin (Lev 4:2, 12, 22 vs Lev 5:17) and teachers who know and speak for God will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1, Luke 12:48). Sin does not change their legal standing of the “saved” before God (Rom 8:1, 6:23, 1Cor 15:3), for the saved continue to sin due to their nature (1John 1:8 and 1John 3:2), although it does interrupt our fellowship with God (Eph 4:30) and brings discipline (Heb 12:6) for the benefit of our spiritual growth (Heb 12:9-10). Sin enslaves the believer (Rom 6:16) wages war against their soul (1Pet 2:11) and causes a loss of heavenly blessing (1Cor 3:15, 2Cor 5:10). The saved do grow further away from sin and towards perfection (James 1:2, Phil 1:6), but at rates relative to our cooperation with the Holy Spirit (See Work of the Holy Spirit).

**** Note:** It is necessary to understand that once saved we are looked upon by God as pure and holy due to the atoning work of Christ, but our earthly nature is still in conflict with our new spiritual condition. If this conflict of internal natures is not understood, we will tend to question our true salvation when we sin, and other Christians when they sin. Harmful judgment and strife will tear down the work of Christ and take the place of the brotherly love and edification that strengthens and holds each other up.

Sin is Not Temptation

Temptation is not sin. Jesus was tempted and can thus sympathize with us (Heb 4:14-16) but was without sin (2Cor 5:21). Temptation can originate internally from us (i.e. the “flesh”) or external to us (i.e. the “world” and the “devil”). We have some control over the effect of our temptations, just as the disciples were encouraged by Jesus to pray so they would not fall into temptation (Mt 26:41). Our desires can also lead us into temptation (1Tim 6:9, Ja 1:14). God’s testing is not the same as Satan’s tempting (James 1:13) although the same Greek word is used for both. God tests us for our good, but Satan tempts us to do us harm; to sin. Temptation can be resisted and we should ask for strength against it. It does not always have to lead to sin, for God always provides a way out (Mt 26:41, 2Tim 2:26).

G. Doctrine of Man's Redemption (Soteriology)

Common Grace

Common grace is all the good blessings God bestows on all humanity, in spite of our sin. Even though we deserve punishment as a just response to our sin (Rom 6:23), God extends His common grace to both the believing and unbelieving physically (Gen 39:5, Ps 145:9, Matt 5:44-48, Luke 6:35-36), intellectually (John 1:9, Rom 1:21), morally (Rom 2:14-15, 1:32, Luke 6:33), socially (Gen 4:17, 19, 26, Rom 13:1) and through religion (Ps 149:9, 15, 1Tim 2:1-2). This grace that God commonly gives to all is not enough to save anyone, because our response to it is not a product of faith (Rom 14:23) or motivated out of love of God (Matt 22:37). Common grace does however, provide the opportunity for more people to be saved (2 Pet 3:9-10) and demonstrates God's His love, mercy (Luke 6:35, Ps 145:9) and justice (Rom 2:5, 3:19).

Election, NOT Fatalism*

Election is the act of God accomplished before the creation to ordain some of humanity to eternal life (Acts 13:48, Rom 8:28-30, 9:11-13, 11:7, Eph 1:4-6, 12, 1Thes 1:4-5, 2Thes 2:13) in order to fulfill His purposes (2Tim 1:9). Election should be viewed as a comfort to believers (Rom 8:28-30), a reason to praise Him (Eph 1:5-6, 12, 1Thess 1:2,4, 2Thes 2:13) and an encouragement to risk everything to spread the gospel (2Tim 2:10). It is extremely important and very difficult to avoid wrongly viewing sovereign election as fatalistic, for the Bible clearly teaches the *real choice* people have to respond to Jesus (Matt 11:28, Rev 22:17, John 5:40, Matt 23:37), believe in Him (John 13:8) and follow His command to spread the Gospel for others to believe (2Tim 2:10). Election is not God rewarding anyone's faith or any other work we might accomplish (Rom 11:5-6). It is simply a free gift He has chosen to give to some for His own purposes and pleasure (Eph 1:5-6, 1Tim 1:9).

Compatibilism*

God is sovereign over everything, yet mankind still has responsible choices to make. God's decreed will works in harmony with man's choices. Somehow, God is able to retain real sovereignty in His election of man even while man makes real choices about salvation and is held responsible for them accordingly.

Reprobation*

Just as some are called to be saved (elected), God, in deep sorrow (Ez 33:11, Matt 23:37), ordains to manifest His justice and punish them (Rom 9:23) for their sins (Jude 4, Rom 11:7, 1Pet 2:8).

The Gospel Call*

The gospel call is the act of God the Father summoning people (Rom 8:30) in such a way that they respond in a saving faith. It is spoken through the human proclamation of His children (Rom 10:14, 2Thes 2:14) whereby God calls people out of darkness (1Pet2:9) and into His kingdom (1Thes 2:12; cf. 1Pet 5:10, 2Pet1:3) to be saints (Rom 1:7, 1Cor

1:2) in fellowship with His Son (1Cor 1:9, Rom 1:6) to experience peace (1Cor 7:15, Col 3:15), freedom (Gal 5:13), hope (Eph 1:18, 4:4) holiness (1Thes 4:7), patience through suffering (1Pet 2:20-21, 3:9) and eternal life (1Tim 6:12).

No one can come to Jesus unless called first by the Father (John 6:44) and have their hearts opened by Him (Acts 16:14). Three elements of the Gospel call include: 1) understanding our sinful nature (Rom 8:23), the consequences of sin being death (Rom 6:23) and that Jesus died to pay the penalty for us (Rom 5:8); 2) the invitation to personally accept the free gift of Jesus' payment for sin (Matt 11:28-30, John 1:11-12, Rev 22:17); and 3) the eternal nature of our reconciliation through Christ (John 3:16) for all who acceptance it (John 6:37).

Regeneration*

Regeneration is solely an act of God in which we play no active part. It is a new birth (Jam 1:18, 1Pet 1:3, John 3:3-8) with a new heart and spirit (Ezek 36:26-27) that brings spiritual life to those spiritually dead (Eph 2:1), effectively making us new creations (2Cor 5:17) with changed behaviors (1Jn 3:9) that can be readily identified through outward good works (Matt 7:15-20). All outwardly apparent good works, however, are not positive proof of inward regeneration (Matt 7:22-23). Inward regeneration will always, however, result in outward good works (James 2:26).

Conversion*

Conversion is our willing response to the Gospel call in which we sincerely turn away or repent from sin (Heb 12:17, 2Cor 7:9-10) and place our trust in Christ as both Savior and Lord. True conversion requires both an understanding of Christ's saving act (Rom 10:14, 1:32, James 2:19, John 3:2, Acts 26:27) as well as an acceptance that it applies personally (John 1:12, 6:37, Matt 11:28-30). All who receive this act by faith (Rom 10:17) and agree to repent (Luke 24:46-47) will be saved (Heb 7:25).

Justification*

Justification is obtaining a legally right standing before God based solely by faith in Jesus Christ and without any effort, work or merit on our part (Rom 3:26, 28, 5:1, Gal 2:16). It involves the forgiveness of our sins (Ps 103:12, Rom 4:6-8) and the placement of Christ's righteousness upon us (Isa 61:10, Rom 3:21-22, 4:3, 5:19) as a free gift (Rom 5:17).

*Note: God's initial election and subsequent regeneration of the elect's heart is a necessity for the elect to be able to respond to Him in faith and ultimately obtain salvation. Without these initial conditions, no one would desire, seek or find a saving faith in God. Just as necessary is the elect's hearing the gospel preached, which involves a necessary act of another human, usually an obedient servant of God. Also necessary for salvation is the individual's acceptance of the gospel applied personally to him, which requires a conscious and necessary act of the elect. Finally, God's necessary act is His justification of the elect who responded.

Adoption*

Adoption is a result of salvation when God brings the saved into His family as one of His children (John 1:2, Rom 8:14-17). They are considered true descendants (Rom 9:7-8) just like the descendants of Isaac (Gal 4:28), heirs to the promises God made to Israel. They are adopted out of a family of wrath (Eph 2:3); disobedient (Eph 2:2; 5:6) slaves (Gal 4:7). Our adoption fulfills our relationship with a Father who loves us (1John 3:1), understands us (Ps 103:13-14), cares for us (Matt 6:32), gives us many good gifts (Matt 7:11) and an inheritance in heaven (Gal 4:7) alongside our brother Christ, the first born into the family of many (Rom 8:29). As God's adopted children He disciplines them out of love (Heb 12:5-6), to suffer (Rom 8:17) and treat other adopted children as brothers and sisters (1Cor 1:10, James 1:2, Matt 12:50).

Sanctification (**Essential for Christian Growth)

Sanctification is the process in which both God (1Thes 5:23, Heb 13:20-21) and man (Rom 6:13; cf. v. 19, 12:1, Phil 2:13) cooperate to bring about a continual spiritual and behavioral growth away from sin and toward the sinless state of Christ. The process begins when we are justified (Tit 3:5, 1Jn 3:9) and given a new nature (Col 3:10). We are freed from the once overpowering dominion of sin (Rom 6:11,14,18) and although sin remains in our lives (Rom 6:12-13, 1Jn 1:8), we are for the first time able and expected to resist it (Rom 6:12-13) with increasing success throughout our lives (2Cor 3:18) until we are perfected (Heb 12:23) at His second coming (1Cor 15:23) and upon our death (Phil 3:21). Sanctification positively effects our minds (Col 3:10), emotions (Gal 5:22), will (Phil 2:13), spirit (2Cor 7:1) and physical bodies (1Thess 5:23).

*Note: The doctrines, the causes and affects of salvation are certainly necessary for salvation, however believing in and understanding them is not necessary in order to be saved.

**Note: Not only is sanctification Christian growth by definition, it is necessary for the growing Christian to understand that he or she will not reach sinless perfection in this life, although all truly saved will be growing toward that goal, albeit at different paces. Without this understanding, great frustration would result as the saved honestly assess and find themselves saved, but still in varying degrees of sinful behavior, perhaps even doubting their very salvation.

Perseverance of the Saints (**Essential for Christian Living)

Those who have truly been called by God, responded in faith and are truly born again will persevere to the end. Jesus will "not lose one" (John 6:38-40) and no one can take any from Him (John 10:27-29), for they have received eternal life (John 3:36), being sealed (Eph 1:13-14) with the promise of being completed in Christ (Phil 1:6). True believers are changed by the Holy Spirit's presence in their heart (Rom 8:15-16) that results in increased obedience to God's will (Rom 8:14) and growth of godly character traits (Gal 5:22-23) over time (2Pet 1:8-10) and faithfully endures to the end (John 8:31-32, Col 1:23, Heb 3:14). Many false brethren (Gal 2:4, 2Cor 11:26) will appear to be

enlightened (Heb 6:4) and repentant (Heb 6:7-8) and even accept a taste of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4), but will ultimately fall away because they have no real relationship in Christ (Matt 7:21-23).

**** Note:** It is necessary for a growing believer to understand that their salvation, once achieved cannot be removed, else their inevitable slips back into sin might cause them to doubt God's saving work in their life.

Death and the Intermediate State (**Necessary for Christian Growth)

For the saved, death is not to be viewed as a punishment, for there is no condemnation for them (Rom 8:1). Rather, God uses death as a final and necessary form of discipline (Heb 12:6, 10-11) to yield obedience through suffering as Christ suffered (Heb 5:8, 2:10, 1Pet 2:21). It is the final test to complete our sanctification (Rom 8:28) and bring immediate (Luke 23:43) union with Christ (Rom 8:17, Phil 3:10). For the saved, it is better than living (2Cor 5:8, Phil 1:21-23) and should not be feared (Heb 2:15, Rom 8:38-39). The unsaved, however, are immediately judged (Heb 9:29) and separated without further hope of changing their state in eternal punishment (Matt 25:41, 46).

****Note:** Understanding what happens after death is not necessary for salvation (although a case for a healthy fear of God's wrath can be made), it is necessary for the saved to be freed from the natural fear of dying, to be able to boldly and confidently put God's will above all selfish desires, even our natural drive for survival. Just as Steven did in Acts 7, and as many faithful martyrs also have done since then.

Glorification

After death, the living and dead bodies of the saved will be powerfully (1Cor 15:43) resurrected (Isa 26:19, Dan 12:2, John 6:39-40, 1Cor 15:51-52, 1Thess 4:14-16) to receive new physical (Luke 24:39), glorified (Rom 8:23-24), spiritual (1Cor 15:44), imperishable (1Cor 15:51-53), recognizable (Luke 9:30) and individualized (John 20:20, 27; 1Cor 15:37-38) bodies like Christ's resurrected body (1Cor 15:20, 23, 42-44, 49; Phil 3:21, 1John 3:2).

Union with Christ

The union of the saved and Christ is the final step and ultimate completion of God's original redemptive plan (Eph 1:4, 2Tim 1:9). The beginning of our individual earthly relationship of working (Rom 15:17), living (Phil 4:13) and hoping (Phil 2:19) "in Christ" (Rom 9:1, 2Cor 2:17, 12:19) as well as our corporate relationship with Him as His "body" (Rom 12:5, 1Cor 10:17, 12:26) will be increased after this life (2Cor 5:8, Phil 1:23, 1Thess 5:10). Our union will include God the Father (John 17:21, 1Thess 1:1, 2Thess 1:1) and the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9, 1Cor 3:16, 6:19) as well.

H. Work of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

The Holy Spirit's Presence and Affect on Believers (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The amount the Holy Spirit works in and blesses lives is according to one's response and obedience to Him. The more we resist and disobey, the less blessing and presence we are given. Jesus had the Holy Spirit upon Him at all times (John 1:32) and without measure (John 3:34).

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon Sampson mightily at times (Judg 13:25, 14:6, 19; 15:14) but ultimately left him as Sampson continued in sin (Judg 16:20) as He did Saul (1Sam 16:14) and the whole nation of Israel (Isa 63:10). In the New Testament, the Pharisees resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51), and Paul warned believers of grieving (Eph 4:30) and quenching (1Thes 5:19) the Holy Spirit. Lying to Him is even more disastrous (Acts 5:3), and He can be offended to such a degree that His conviction of sin that leads to repentance, can be entirely withheld (Matt 12:31-32; cf. Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10). He will not force His way into anyone's life (1Cor 14:32).

The opposite is also true. He was poured out in fullness upon believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18) in order that we can have close fellowship (2Cor 3:14) and receive gifts from Him (1Cor 12:11), understand truth (2Tim 1:14) and receive ministries (Acts 20:28). He can become so evident that God's perceived presence in believers resembles streams of living water (John 7:38-39).

As believers, it is possible to be especially and immediately "filled" with the Holy Spirit enabling us to feel, desire, do, speak, pray and minister just as God does (Eph 5:18; cf. Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8; 6:3,5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9), depending fully on His power (Zech 4:6) in our actions (Rom 8:12-16; Gal 5:16-26) and our minds (Rom 8:4-6).

The Revelations of the Holy Spirit (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The Holy Spirit reveals the presence of God on earth and among humanity in many ways. Scripture was revealed to men by the Holy Spirit in order to pen the Old Testament (2Pet 1:21, Matt 22:43, Acts 1:16, 1Pet 1:11) as well as the New Testament (John 16:13, 16:3; cf. Eph 3:5). The Holy Spirit also revealed God's presence among people to speak for God in the Old Testament (Num 11:25-26, Judges 14:6, 19; 1 Sam 10:6, 10) and the New (John 1:32, Acts 2:2-3). Today He reveals the presence of God by giving evidence that believers are children of God (Rom 8:16), giving gifts that manifest His presence (1Cor 12:7-11) as well as the occasional miraculous sign and wonder (Heb 2:4; cf. 1Cor 2:4; Rom 15:19). He reveals his desires (Rom 8:4-16; Gal 5:16-25) and guides and directs God's people for specific works (Isa 30:1, Acts 8:29, 19:19-20; 11:12) as well as day-to-day guidance (Acts 15:28, Rom 8:14; Gal 5:18). He manifests Godly characteristics by convicting humanity of sin (John 16:8-11), pouring His love into hearts (Rom 5:5, 15:30), and producing peace and joy in our midst (1Cor 14:33, Rom 14:17,

Acts 13:52), as well as truth (John 14:17), wisdom (Deut 34:9) comfort (Acts 9:31) freedom (2Cor 3:17) righteousness (Rom 14:17) and hope (Rom 14:13). He reveals to us God's teachings in the Bible (John 14:26, 16:13) and the gifts He gives us (1Cor 2:12, Ps 119:18, Eph 1:17-19).

The Empowerment of the Holy Spirit (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The Holy Spirit empowers by giving life to all creatures (Ps 104:30, Job 34:14-15) and new spiritual life to believers upon regeneration (John 3:6-7; cf. vv. 5,8; 6:63, 2Cor 3:6). The Holy Spirit gives power for service to God by providing leadership wisdom (Num 27:18, Deut 34:9), power to deliver from harm (Judge 3:10, 6:34, 1 Sam 11:6) and skill for artistic work (Ex 31:3, 35:31). The Holy Spirit came upon and in people for various works for God and Israel (Isa 42:1, 61:1; Ezek 2:2; Dan 4:8-9, 18, 5:11; Mic 3:8) and in the New Testament in Jesus (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22, 4:14; John 1:32) and the Apostles (Acts 1:8, 6:5, Rom 15:19), the early church (1Thes 1:5, 1Pet 1:12). He empowers Christians today for ministry (1Cor 12:11), effective prayer (Rom 8:26) and overcoming spiritual opposition (Matt 12:28, 1Cor 12:10, Eph 6:17).

****Note:** Although some growth will indeed occur according to the promise and the seal of the Holy Spirit, being aware of how one can limit or fully implement the work of Him can have a drastic effect on how much presence, blessing and empowerment the Holy Spirit affects in our lives, which in turn will minimize or maximize our rate of growth in Christ.

Work of the Holy Spirit (****Essential for Accurate Teaching)

The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially the church. –Grudem. Present from the very beginning (Gen 1:2) and anticipated throughout the Old Testament (Isa 32:14-18, 44:3, Ezek 36:26-2, Joel 2:28-29) as a promised new covenant (Isa 44:3, 37:14, 39:29) the Holy Spirit grants power to the church (Acts 2:8, 2:4, 17-18) as the “first fruits” (Rom 8:23) and a guarantee (2Cor 1:22, 5:5) of the full future manifestation of God's presence in the new heavens and new earth (Rev 21:3-4). The power presently granted to the church is manifested in four ways; it empowers, purifies, reveals, unites and gives evidence of the presence and blessing of God.

******Note:** In order to teach under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, a teacher must first have a clear understanding of the workings of the Holy Spirit.

The Purification of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit begins purification by first condemning us of sin (John 16:8-11, Acts 7:51) and continues this work after salvation by sanctifying us (1Cor 6:11, Tit 3:5) to produce an increase in godly fruit (Gal 5:22) and ever changing us more into a likeness of Christ (2Cor 3:18) and giving us the ability to overcome sin (Rom 8:13, Phil 1:19).

The Unification of the Holy Spirit (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The Holy Spirit unifies the church, as prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:28-32, Acts 2:16-18), into a fellowship of believers (Acts 2:44-47, 2Cor 13:14) united in mind, love and purpose (Phil 2:1-2) with a bond of peace (Eph 4:3). He allows different people with differing gifts, as proportioned by Him (1Cor 12:11) to operate together as a single body (1Cor 12:21) for the common good (1Cor 12:7). He minimized strife between believers (Gal 5:20) and replaces it with godly relations (Rom 5:5, Gal 5:22, Col 1:8) that promote harmony and love for each other.

****Note:** In order to live and grow as a still-sinful member within the still-sinful Body of Christ, one must have an understanding of the miraculous and necessary spiritual work of unification.

I. Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

The Authority to Conduct Spiritual Warfare in the World*

The church has been given by God, the authority and power to carry out warfare in the spiritual realm (2 Cor 10:3-4) by preaching the Word to breakthrough to hardened hearts, awaken faith (Rom 10:17, James 1:18, 1Pet 1:23), combat opposition to God's ministry (1 Cor 4:19-20) and build up believers (2 Cor 13:10).

***Note:** There would be none who would come to a saving faith in Christ, in this age, without the church having the authority and power to battle in the spiritual realm to overcome the hardness of heart of fallen man.

The Authority to Preach the Gospel in the World (**Necessary for Christian Growth and Living)

The church has been given the authority to preach the Gospel, which carries the power of salvation (Rom 1:16). Its individual members hold this same authority in a secondary sense, and are commanded to share the Gospel and witness for God personally (Acts 1:8).

***Note:** Without understanding that the church, that is the body of Christ, has been given but the authority to preach the Gospel, and that no one would hear the Gospel call, and no one would be saved, one would not take their role in forwarding the Gospel (Rom 10:14-15).

Means of God's Grace to the Body (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

All the special blessing God desires to give His children are supplied primarily through and intended for the church body and include; teaching the Word, church leadership, baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer for one another, worship, church discipline, giving,

spiritual gifts, fellowship, evangelism and personal ministry to others. This is not an exhaustive list, some categorize them differently and many are further explained below.

The Authority to Teach the Word (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

In addition to being the means of salvation (Rom 1:16), the Word when taught accurately conveys the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24, James 1:18) in all areas of Christian life, able to build up (Acts 20:32), teach all manners of righteousness (2 Tim 3:16), light man's path (Ps 119:105) and give hope (Rom 15:4) by powerfully positively affecting (Jer 23:29, Eph 6:17) the deepest elements of our being (Heb 4:12).

The Authority to Lead and Govern (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

Leaders from within the body are called into offices intended to guide the greater congregation in Christian growth. These offices are filled with people called by God (Acts 20:28, 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11) and confirmed by other leaders and members of the body (1 Tim 4:14). The general offices of authority include:

- 1) **The original eye-witness Apostles** (Acts 1:22, 1 Cor 9:1, 15:7-9) who were personally appointed by Christ (Luke 6:13, Acts 1:2-3; cf; 4:33) and upon whom the foundation of the church has been built (Eph 2:20).
- 2) **The Elder/pastor/bishop/overseer** is a highly qualified (1 Tim 3:2-7, Tit 1:6-9) leader appointed (Acts 14:23, Tit 1:5) to tend/shepherd the local congregation (1 Pet 5:1-2) by teaching (Tit 1:9, Eph 4:11, 1 Tim 3:2), providing oversight (Acts 20:28), and ruling (1 Tim 5:17) gently by example (1 Pet 5:2-5), but with the expectation of being submitted to (Heb 13:17). Specific New Testament guidance indicates this role is for male leaders only (1 Tim 2:11-14). Many other passages imply this office is male (1 Tim 3:1-7, Tit 1:5-9, 1 Tim 3:1-7). Jesus established this precedent throughout the Old Testament and in His selection of Apostles being leaders of the early church, and within families the norm of male leadership (Eph 5:22-24).
- 3) **The deacon** is a qualified leader (1 Tim 3:8-13) distinct from elders/pastor/bishop/overseer (Phil 1:1) charged with leading others in service of the body (Acts 6:1-6) but without the added authority to rule or teach as elders do. Even though designated as a leader, because it is not given "oversight" responsibility, scripture gives no indication that women can't be appointed into these leadership offices.

The Authority to Baptize New Members into the Body (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

Baptism is Christ's command to the church (Matt 28:19) to allow new believers to publicly profess new faith in Him. Baptism is not a prerequisite to gain salvation (Eph 2:8-9, Rom 6:23, Gal 3:10, 5:4), nor is it required for salvation (Luke 23:43). It is a simple, tangible and public identification with Christ symbolizing being buried and raised with Him (Col 2:12, Rom 6:3-4), being washed of sin (Acts 22:16) and regenerated (Tit 3:5). It is reserved only for believers (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 16:32-33) and in the early church

was done in a body of water large enough for immersion (Acts 8:36, John 3:23, Mark 1:10).

The Authority to Conduct the Lord's Supper (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The church is given authority to regularly and in unity (1 Cor 10:17) conduct "The Lord's Supper" for *all* believers (Matt 26:27). Only believers should participate (1 Cor 11:29-30) and only after personal examination to ensure right motives (1 Cor 11:20-21) and proper relationships with others in the body (1 Cor 11:29, Matt 5:23-34). The practice was enacted by Jesus (Matt 26:26-29) for us to remember His sacrificial work on the cross (1 Cor 11:25) by symbolically accepting the sacrifice of His body and spilled blood (compare to symbolism; John 15:1, 10:9, 6:41) and receiving Him as true spiritual food (John 6:53-57). It is in no way a real sacrifice with real blood or body, for Jesus accomplished His sacrifice once and for all (John 19:30, Heb 10:3) in anticipation of the real fellowship meal with believers in heaven (Matt 26:29, Rev 19:9).

Practice of Corporate Worship (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The church by its nature and design worships God corporately by teaching and admonishing one another and singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Col 3:16) to glorify Him (Isa 43:6-7, Eph 1:12), delight in Him (Ps 27:4, 16:11, 73:25) and praise and bless Him (Acts 2:46, Luke 24:52-53) in anticipation to the ceaseless worship of Him in Heaven (Rev 4:8, 5:12). It is to intentionally draw near to God (Heb 10:22) with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28-29). As a result God delights in us (Isa 62:3-5, Zeph 3:17), draws near to us (James 4:8), ministers to us (Heb 4:16, 2 Cor 3:18) and reveals to unbelievers that He is present among us (1 Cor 14:25).

Full Employment of Spiritual Gifts (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The church is able to make use of the spiritual gifts given to individual believers by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of empowering ministry within the church in the very manner that Jesus (Luke 4:41) and His disciples (Matt 10:7-8, Luke 10:1-2) ministered, and as promised in the Old Testament (Num 11:29, Joel 2:28-29). These powerful spiritual gifts, distinct from God-given natural talents are given to believers only (Acts 1:8) by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:11) for the common good (1 Cor 12:7), building up (1 Cor 14:12, Eph 4:12) and edification of the body (1 Cor 14:26) so that we will be dependent on each other (1 Cor 12:12-26) to meet every spiritual need. Individuals receive different (1 Cor 12:11) and irrevocable (Romans 12:6) spiritual gifts of varying degrees (1 Cor 12:11) depending on their faith (Rom 12:6) and attention we give to them (1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6). Only as a body does the church have all the necessary and varied gifts (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 7:7, 12:8-10, 28; Eph 4:11-16) that is necessary to fully function (1 Cor 1:7). When misused or falsely portrayed, alleged spiritual gifts cause confusion (1 Cor 14:32-33), turns off our minds (1 Cor 14:14) and making outsiders think the church is crazy (1 Cor 14:23) instead of building up the church and declaring to unbelievers that God is truly present (1 Cor 14:24-25).

The Authority to Discipline the Body (**Essential for Christian Growth and Living)

The church has been given the authority to accomplish discipline within the church when needed (Matt 18:17-18) for the purpose of gentle restoration (Gal 6:1) and reconciliation (James 5:20) of the offender. Church discipline also keeps sin from spreading to other believers (Heb 12:15, 1 Cor 5:2, 6-7; 1 Tim 5:20), protects the honor of Christ (Rom 2:24) in the sight of unbelievers (1 Cor 6:6) and allows believers within the church to be found pure and undefiled by Him (2 Pet 3:14, Eph 5:27) so that He does not have to discipline the body Himself (1 Cor 11:27-34, Rev 2:14-15). Discipline can be for all manner of sins including divisiveness (Rom 16:17), incest (1 Cor 5:1), laziness (2 Thes 3:6-10), disobeying scripture (2 Thes 3:14-15), blasphemy (1 Tim 1:20) and wrong teaching (2 John 10-11), but are usually those that are publicly known, outwardly evident and continued over a period of time. Many factors must be considered when discipline is found necessary:

1) **Minimum Amount Necessary.** Discipline should involve no more people or action than that which is minimally necessary for restoration and reconciliation to occur but may require the involvement of the whole church (Matt 18:15-17) and cutting off of fellowship as a final act (1 Cor 5:11, 2 Thes 3:14-15, 2 John 10-11).

2) **Leadership Considerations.** Because they are much more likely to be falsely accused, church leaders have additional protection from personal attack and harsher punishment if found guilty (1 Tim 5:19-21).

3) **Allowed Variation of Behavior.** Discipline is not for behaviors where Christians are allowed legitimate disagreement according to their own consciences and requires instead a wide degree of tolerance (Rom 14:1-23).

4) **Individual Responsibility.** Individuals hold this same authority in a secondary sense, and are instructed to hold each other accountable to the instructions of Christ (Matt 16:16). In order to minimize the number of people involved, it is always the responsibility of the offended party to take the initiative and go to the offending party, to offer reconciliation with as few as two people involved; the offender and the offended (Matt 5:23).

Separate and Distinct from Civil Government Authority

The authority to promote good Christian behavior among Christians is separate from the civil government's authority to govern over all its citizens. Not all members of society are members of the Kingdom of God, which is "not of this world" (John 18:36). All members of the Kingdom of heaven are however, under the authority of civil government and should follow the mandates of civil authority (Matt 22:21, 2 Cor 10:3-4).

**** Note: Implications of Essential Church Responsibilities for Christian Living and Growth.**

All of the church functions listed as non-essential for salvation, are indeed very essential to promote harmony and growth of the body and the individuals within the body. Just as the essentials are necessary for health growth, adding extra-biblical “non-essentials” can also stunt healthy growth. An example would be burdening the body with extra ordinances beyond baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and effectively diluting the significance intended for both.

****Note:** Implications of Poor Execution of Church Essentials. It is also essential to the salvation and healthy growth of the church and its members that the specifics of ecclesiology are carried out in proper fashion; else the effectiveness of the particular essential will be minimized or effectively erased. The misuse of tongues is a perfect example. The purpose and use of tongues is clearly laid out in scripture, as are the negative effects of wrong use. No charity should be offered when this gift is clearly portrayed in a manner that is neither edifying to the body nor glorifying to God.

J. Doctrine of the Future (Eschatology)

Principles of Prophecy (****Necessary for Teaching)

Prophecy does not give us a clear picture of exactly how the future will unfold. By design it gives us some foreknowledge of events that will unfold, such as persecution in our lives and end-times events. Also, by design, these pictures are intentionally clouded and veiled so believers will remain in anticipation of the second coming, always believing that His return is imminent, giving us reason to take action today and not wait for tomorrow.

Necessity of Humility and Grace in Interpretation Prophecy (****Necessary for Teaching)

Our passion for deep study and thirst for accurate and applicable understanding of Scripture often collides with the reality that our picture of the future is intentionally clouded. It is absolutely necessary to remain humble in our limited view as we discuss and debate prophecy. It is absolutely against God’s will for us to divide ourselves out of frustration or become so certain about our interpretation that we miss key events that would otherwise add clarity. Where ever the Bible stops teaching, we must also stop learning (Deut 29:29).

******Note:** Eschatology is often a very passionate subject for many believers today, and has often wrongly resulted in disunity within the body and division of fellowship. It is absolutely necessary for the leader/teacher to keep an open and humble heart when teaching eschatology. Standing too heavily on one’s personal convictions can cause a weaker brother to stumble to the point of harming himself of the body.

Return of Christ (**Essential for Christian Living)

Jesus Christ the Lord Himself will visibly (Rev 1:7) descend from heaven (1Thess 4:16, 1Cor 15:51-52) a second time (Heb 9:28) at an unexpected hour (Matt 24:44, Mark 13:32-33) in the same way that He ascended (Acts 1:11) to save those who eagerly wait for Him (Heb 9:28). When this occurs, believers will become like Him (1John 3:2) and come to be with Him in heaven (John 14:3).

Believers are instructed to wait patiently (James 5:7-9), but eagerly (Tit 2:12-13) and always be ready for His joyous coming (Matt 25:21).

We will be able to know the time is coming near (Heb 10:25) when increasing famine and earthquakes occur (Mark 13:7-8, Luke 21:20-24), the Gospel is preached to all nations (Mark 3:10, Matt 24:24), and many false prophets and false Christs demonstrate wonders to try to mislead humanity and even the elect away from God (Mark 13:5-6, 21, 22).

The Tribulation (**Essential for Christian Living)

The great tribulation (Matt 24:21) will be a time of great trouble (Rev 5-19) and distress (Dan 12:1) as has never happened before. It will occur as a result of increased wickedness of mankind (Matt 24:12) and is commonly thought to last 7 years total, two distinct 3 ½ year periods. (Dan 9:27, Rev 11:3, 12:6; cf 12:14; Dan 7:25).

The Rapture (***)Distinctive)

Some believe based on Jesus' promise to the church of Philadelphia (Rev 3:10) that all believers will be spared the tribulation and be caught up with Christ beforehand (1Thess 4:16-17- see pre-tribulation pre-millennialism below). Others believe that the church will be raptured in the middle of the tribulation (see mid-tribulation pre-millennialism below) and other still at the end of the tribulation (see historical pre-millennialism). Support for the church undergoing some or all of the tribulation are found in teachings about the blessedness and rewards for enduring persecution (1 Pet 4:14; 2:21, Rom 8:17, Heb 2:10, Rev 2:10).

The Millennium Kingdom (***)Distinctive)

How the prophetic 1000 year reign (Rev 20:4-5) will come to pass is not clearly understood or agreed upon. Amillennialism and post millennialism expects Christ to return after (post) the millennial reign. The pre-millennial views expect Christ to return first, and then set up His millennial kingdom. The pre-millennial views seem more in line with the overall weight of scripture, however it is important to first recognize the clouded view we are given of prophecy.

- 1) Amillennialism. Some believe it is occurring presently as Christ reigns in heaven with believers (based on Matt 28:18), and He will return when it is over. This view is called amillennialism.

2) Post-millennialism. A similar view called post-millennialism predicts that the present age will give way to a time when Christianity will overcome the world and reign with peace and righteousness. After which He will return for the judgment.

3) Historical pre-millennialism. Some believe that He will return publicly after the tribulation and prior to the millennial reign (pre-millennialism) to resurrect dead believers and rapture living believers (1Thes 4:16-17 and Matt 24:15-31) to reign with them on earth. Christ will reign on earth in His resurrected body with all believers for 1000yrs, and then will come the resurrection and judgment of non-believers. This view is supported because the Bible nowhere clearly there will be two separate returns of Christ; 1 for believers, and then one to rule after the tribulation.

4) Pre-tribulation pre-millennialism. Some believe that Christ will return secretly to rapture believers prior to the 7 year tribulation based on Jesus' promise to the church in Philadelphia (Rev 3:10). After the tribulation, Christ will return with His followers to rule over the earth for 1000 years.

5) Mid-tribulation pre-millennialism. Similar to the pre-trib view above except that the church will be raptured halfway through the tribulation at the 3 ½ year mark. The first 3 ½ years depicts the wrath of man under the rule of the Antichrist when the church is under persecution for her relationship with Christ. The last half depicts the wrath of God which the church would have no part in.

The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment (*Essential for Salvation)

All people who have ever lived will stand before God on Judgment Day to be judged according to their deeds and their relationship with God as either saved or unsaved (Rev 20:11-15). It will be a day of wrath for the unsaved as we will be judged in righteousness (Acts 17:30-31) as individuals (Rom 1:18-32) and as nations (Isa 13-23 et al). It will occur after the millennial kingdom (Rev 20:7-10) and is called the White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11).

1) The unsaved will stand before Jesus Christ specifically (2Tim 4:1, Acts 10:42, Rev 20:12) in a judgment of wrath and fury (Rom 2:5-7) where there will be varying degrees of punishment (Rev 20:12-13) based on the deeds of the individual and his or her knowledge of God (Rom 2:5, Luke 12:47-48). Every deed will be remembered (Matt 12:36), even those sins committed in secret (Eccl 12:14, Rom 2:16, Luke 12:2-3).

2) The saved will be separated from the unsaved (Matt 25:31-46) and also stand before Jesus Christ (2Tim 4:1, Acts 10:42, Rom 14:10, 12) to receive what is due based on their deeds either good or bad (2Cor 5:10; cf. Rom 2:6-11, Rev 20:12, 15).

Believers will be given varying degrees of reward (1Cor 3:12-15) and not be eternally condemned (John 5:24, Rom 8:1, Rev 11:18) because their sins will not be remembered (Mic 7:19, Ps 103:12, Isa 43:25, Heb 8:12). The individual rewards and varying status in heaven (Luke 19:17, 19) will not create different levels of joy, for all believers will attain fullness of joy in worship of God (Rev 4:10-11). Believers will somehow help in the work of God's judgment (1Cor 6:6:2-3, 5-6, Rev 20:4, Matt 19:28).

3) Angels will also stand in judgment of God according to their deeds (2Pet 2:4, Jude 6, 1Cor 6:3).

4) Fair and Impartial. It will be absolutely fair, just and impartial (1Pet 1:17, Col 3:25) and nobody will be able to truthfully disagree with it (Rom 3:19). It will be so true and fair that it will cause worship (Rev 19:1-2) rendering payment for all wrongs committed (Col 3:25) and satisfy our internal desire for justice (Rom 12:19).

5) Provisions of the Judgment. The final judgment is what allows believers today the absolute freedom to forgive completely today every wrong against us or others (1Pet 2:22-23, Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60) and provides motivation for believers to live righteously (Matt 6:20, 2Pet 3:34, 1Pet 4:4-5) and evangelize the lost passionately (Ezek 33:11, 2Pet 3:9).

6) God's Sorrow. God will have no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked (Ezek 33:11 wanting all to embrace life with Him (Matt 23:37-38, Luke 19:41-42). His judgment will come after exceeding patience (Rev 6:10) but with perfect righteousness (Rev 19:1-3).

Hell (*Essential for Salvation)

God will righteously punish wicked man by casting him or her into Hell, a place where occupants will weep and gnash their teeth (Matt 25:30) and consciously (Luke 16:22-24) being tormented (Rev 14:9-11) day and night for ever (Rev 20:10, Matt 25:41, 46).

*Note: Failing to believe in a righteous judgment of God and a place of eternal punishment leaves one without need for a Savior. The very essence of Christianity is the fact the God sent His Son to save humanity from eternal separation in hell.

The New Heaven and New Earth

Heaven today is in some way a physical place (Acts 1:9-11, 7:55-56) where God dwells (Isa 66:1, Matt 6:9) that is separated from our earth (1Pet 3:22).

In the beginning, however, God planned and prepared another physical kingdom for believers to inherit (Matt 25:34) where they will reside in the presence of God (Rev 21:3) separated from any accursed thing (Rev 22:3). It will somehow be a unified heaven and earth called the New Heaven and New Earth (Isa 65:17) and will come with a new city of God called New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). Righteousness will dwell there (2

Pet 3:13) and former things will be forgotten (Isa 65:17). The old heaven and earth will be removed (Rev 21:1) as all works of the world will perish (Heb 1:11-12) having been 'shaken loose' (Heb 12:26-27) and burned up (2Pet 3:10). It will be:

- 1) All new but with original designs. The original "very good" creation (Gen 1:31) will be freed from the effects of our sin (Rom 8:19-21), under the good subjection of man (Heb 2:8-9, Matt 5:5).
- 2) Eternal, but with a sense of time with months and years (Rev 22:2)
- 3) Beautiful (Rev 21:2-4, 11-27) and joyous as people will dwell with God (Ps 16:11, Ps 27:4, Rev 21:3-4).
- 4) Physical (Rev 15-21) for our new physical bodies (1Cor 15:20, 23, 49; Phil 3:21) and having some resemblance to our present earth (Rev 19:9, 22:1-2, Luke 22:18) but different needing no sun or moon for light (Rev 21:23, Jude 1:24; cf. Rom 3:23, 8:18, 1Cor 15:43).